

REMARKS

Claims 1-32 were pending when last examined. Applicant thanks the Examiner for allowance of Claims 14-22. Claims 1-5, 7, 12, 13, 23-25, 27, and 28 stand rejected, and Claims 6, 8-11, 26, and 29-32 are objected to but indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claims 1, 5, 23, 24, and 27 have been amended.

Claim Objections

Claim 5 is objected to for reciting “the signal detector” when no signal detector was recited earlier. The phrase has been changed to “a signal detector.”

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §102

Claims 1-5, 7, 12, 13, 23, 27, and 28 are rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,184,631 to Noma et al (“Noma”).

Claims 1, 23, and 27 are patentable over Noma at least because they recite an “... electrically conductive device spaced apart from the light emitting device” As disclosed in the subject application, an exemplary embodiment includes lamps and metal sheets spaced apart from the lamps (see page 8, first full paragraph). FIG. 5, for example, illustrates that the metal sheets do not physically contact the lamps but are separated from the lamps by a space gap. There is no hard connection between the metal sheets and the lamps.

The Office Action of November 30, 2005 (“the Office Action”) reads Noma such that the discharge tube (7) corresponds to the “light emitting device” recited in Claims 1, 23, and 27 and the rectifier (9) corresponds to the “electrically conductive device” recited in Claims 1, 23, and 27. However, Noma’s discharge tube (7) is physically connected to the rectifier (9) by an electrically conductive medium. For example, Noma’s FIG. 2 shows a hard connection between the discharge tube (7) and the rectifier (9). Plus, nowhere in the specification does it state that the rectifier (9) may be spaced apart from the discharge tube (7). In fact, the specification states that the discharge tube (7) is connected to a current detector (8), and that the rectifier (9) is connected to an output terminal of the current detector (8). Noma, col. 5, lines 23-37. Thus, Noma does not teach an “... electrically conductive device spaced apart from the light emitting device...,” and Claims 1, 23, and 27 are patentable over Noma.

Claims 2-5, 7, 12, and 13 depend from Claim 1 and are therefore patentable over Noma for the same reason as Claim 1.

Similarly, Claim 28 depends from Claim 27 and is patentable over Noma for the same reason as Claim 27.

Claims 1-5, 7, 12, 13, 23, 27, and 28 are rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,407,480 to Nakanishi et al (“Nakanishi”).

Claims 1, 23, and 27 are patentable over Nakanishi at least because they recite an “... electrically conductive device spaced apart from the light emitting device....” Nakanishi, like Noma, fails to teach an electrically conductive device that is spaced apart from the light emitting device. The Office Action reads Nakanishi such that element 203 corresponds to the “light emitting device” and element 219 corresponds to the “electrically conductive device.” Under this reading, however, the electrically conductive device is not spaced apart from the light emitting device in Nakanishi. For example, in Nakanishi’s FIG. 52, it shows that there is a hard connection between the cold cathode tube (203) and the voltage detection circuit (219). The circuit as depicted in FIG. 52 would not function as intended if the voltage detection circuit (219) were spaced apart from the cold cathode tube (203), for example by an air gap. Thus, Claims 1, 23, and 27 are patentable over Nakanishi.

Claims 2-5, 7, 12, and 13 depend from Claim 1 and are patentable over Nakanishi for the same reason as Claim 1.

Likewise, Claim 28 depends from Claim 27 and is patentable over Nakanishi for the same reason as Claim 27.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC §103

Claims 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Noma in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,075,325 to Kouno et al (“Kouno”).

Claim 24 is patentable over a combination of Noma and Kouno at least because it recites “... an electrically conductive device spaced apart from the light emitting device....” As stated above, Noma does not disclose an electrically conductive device that is positioned as recited in Claim 24. Nor does Kouno, which teaches a cold cathode tube (3) that is physically connected to a load current comparator (8) and a support mechanism (10), for example as shown in Kouno’s FIG.

1. There is no electrically conductive device that is spaced apart from the cold cathode tube (3) in Kouno's circuit. Thus, Claim 24 is patentable over Kouno.

Claim 25 depends from Claim 24 and is therefore patentable over Noma and Kouno for the same reason as Claim 24.

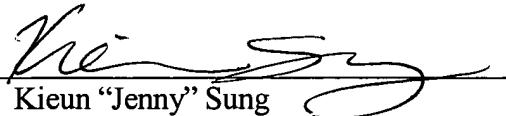
In addition to Claims 14-22 that are already allowed, Claims 1-13 and 23-32 are now also in condition for allowance. Please telephone the undersigned attorney at (650) 833-2121 if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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